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THE ROUND TABLE

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?

In order to gather sustenance for two or three of my secretly cherished heresies concerning the teaching of Freshmen English composition, six weeks after the opening of college I gave to the first-year men a test designed to reveal, first, what it pleases me to call their awareness, and secondly, their tastes in reading. A part of the results I offer here, without conclusion or even inference, confident that not many readers will miss the general significance of these data, and hopeful that a few will pierce to the heart of my apostasy.

I. *Tell very briefly what the following words mean to you:*

This set was given to forty-four students, about half the total number of Freshmen. In grading the replies, I counted the scantiest sort of information a correct response; for example, "Bismarck—a famous German statesman" or "Bismarck—a famous German of the nineteenth century" was accepted for the moment as adequate. I have given, in each instance, after the record of satisfactory answers, one or more of the most saliently suggestive and often smile-provoking blunders that were made. These I have set down just as they were submitted, misspellings and all.

BISMARCK: Twenty-six correct answers—"an Island in the Sea," "a city," "a robust man," "a general some place in Russia."

MASEFIELD: Not one correct answer—"a small village north of Indianapolis," "famous English actor."

VON TIRPITZ: Nine correct answers—"a German news paper in N. Y."

CADORNA: Twenty-three correct answers—"a Spanniard," "place in Europe," "a Mexican leader."

EURIPIDES: Eight correct answers—"philosphur" "higher mathematics," "river in Asia miner."

FALSTAFF: Eleven correct answers—"a musical term."

CANTERBURY: Twenty-three correct answers—"a building in England," "the Catholic leader in England."

FLEET STREET: Nine correct answers—"street in Paris."

WALL STREET: Forty-two correct answers—"located in New York city," "N. Ys. main street."

SUDERMANN: No correct answers (only one man attempted to reply)—“a famous German composer.”

LUDENDORFF: Twelve correct answers—“a royal family,” “a city in Germany.”

SULVA BAY: One correct answer (only four men tried this one)—“a bay in the Atlantic Ocean.”

RODIN: Four correct answers—“a famous French river,” “a well known French sculpture.”

LEMBERG: Three correct answers—“a city in Belgium,” “German State,” “Swedish minister to Argentine,” “a town in northern France.”

WHISTLER: Eleven correct answers—“a famous musician.”

FUNSTON: Thirty-seven correct answers—“a general on the present American staff,” “Admiral of American Navy,” “a diseased U. S. general.”

GEORGE V: Twenty correct answers—“Eng. ruler at the time we gained our independence,” “King of England in 1400.”

CONFUCIUS: Nine correct answers—“meaning a lot of turmoil.”

LUTHER: Twenty-seven correct answers—“a man.”

ARMADA: Thirty-three correct answers—“a U. S. warship,” “a Spanish battleship,” “a city in France,” “the British fleet.”

CONRAD: One correct answer—“a writter,” “a great modern time actor.”

DEWEY: Forty correct answers—“hero of manilla bay,” “a captain in Cuba.”

BOLSHEVIKI: Four correct answers—“a great Russian general,” “city in the war zone.”

LAZARUS: Twenty-five correct answers—“a biblical character,” “one of Christ’s disciples.”

HENRY ESMOND: Thirteen correct answers—“an American author,” “a character in a book by Elliot,” “an English Catholic bishop.”

(The following set was given to forty-two students, the remainder of the class.)

PETER THE GREAT: Seventeen correct answers—“king of ancient Greece.”

AMY LOWELL: Four correct answers—“a Writter,” “wife of the poet Lowell.”

VON MACKENSON: Nineteen correct answers—“a German commander of the 10th cen.”

SOPHOCLES: Seven correct answers—“a Greasian drama writer.”

SIBERT: Five correct answers—“rearadmiral in U. S. navy,” “a great musician and composer,” “mountains in Russia.”

MALVOLIO: Four correct answers—"a very bad man," "a great painter."

STRATFORD-ON-AVON: Twenty-four correct answers—"Street in Eng. on which S. lived," "home of Charles Dickens," "a street where Luther lived."

THE STRAND: Five correct answers—"a theater in Indianapolis," "a river," "movie show in Milwaukee."

HINDENBURG: Thirty correct answers—"a town."

FIFTH AVENUE: Thirty-eight correct answers—"a part of N. Y."

HAUPTMANN: No correct answers—"a German aviator," "a frenchman," "an inventor."

SALONICA: Seven correct answers—"one of the revolutionary leaders in Russia," "a poet."

RODIN: One correct answer—"a god."

RIGA: Fifteen correct answers—"a lawmaking body," "a ruler."

JOHN SINGER SARGENT: Two correct answers—"the inventor of the Singer Sewing Machine."

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION: Nine correct answers—"a museum in N. Y."

CLEMENCEAU: Three correct answers—"a kind of perfumery."

BECKY SHARP: Seven correct answers—"the American nurse who was shot in Germany for treason," "woman who made the first American flag," "a great movie actress," "wife of famous general," "an Indian."

THE KORAN: Fourteen correct answers—"a city in India," "the ruler of Japan."

BOLSHEVIKI: Two correct answers—"a famous Frenchman," "a Russian statesman," "a Russian traitor."

ESTHER: Twenty-eight correct answers—"a painter and etcher."

CONSTANTINE: Ten correct answers—"an Indian chief," "the ruler of Turkey."

LEMBERG: Four correct answers—"a city in Belgium," "a city near the Belgian line in Germany."

HOUSE: Seven correct answers—"name of French town," "where to live," "on the shipping board of the U. S. A."

LAZARUS: Twenty-seven correct answers—"a bible character commonly located in Hades," "a man of the olden days who was raised from the dead by the grace of god," "a man killed by David," "a jewess," "a sick man healed by the dogs."

II. *Have you read one book carefully since college began?* (Required reading does not count.)

Out of the entire class of eighty-six students, only twenty-seven replied in the affirmative.

III. *Are you at present reading a book not required by your college work? If so, what is it?*

Twenty-three of the eighty-six answered that they were.

IV. *Who are your favorite authors of prose fiction?*

Jack London was mentioned sixteen times; Harold Bell Wright and Charles Dickens, fourteen times; Sir Walter Scott, eleven times; O. Henry, ten times; Poe, six times; Churchill, Beach, and McCutcheon, five times; Twain, Gene Stratton-Porter, Tarkington, Lew Wallace, Zane Grey, and Irvin Cobb, four times; Kipling, Rhinehart, and Fox, three times; Garland, Lardner, Cooper, Eliot, Thackeray, Meredith Nicholson, Stevenson, and McGrath, twice; and Oppenheim, Hawthorne, Davis, Page, Farnol, Fitch, Blithe, Doyle, Irving, de Maupassant, Connor, Hugo, White, and Dixon, once.

V. *Who are your favorite poets?*

Riley was mentioned thirty times; Longfellow, twenty-five times; Tennyson, fourteen times; Wordsworth, six times; Poe, five times. Byron, Scott, and Shakespeare, four times; Kipling, Lowell, and Burns, three times; Browning, Bryant, Whittier, and Service, twice; and Holmes, Mason, Chaucer, and Herschell, once.

VI. *What magazines do you read regularly?*

Thirty-six students replied that they read no magazines regularly. The others made mention of the following periodicals the indicated number of times: *Literary Digest*, nineteen; *Saturday Evening Post*, sixteen; *Cosmopolitan*, eight; *American*, seven; *Collier's Weekly*, five; *McClure's*, four; *Independent* and the *American Boy*, three; *Popular Mechanics*, *Hearst's*, *Review of Reviews*, and the *Outlook*, two; and *Christian Endeavor World*, *Railroad Man's Magazine*, *Youth's Companion*, *McCall's*, *Current Opinion*, *Detective Stories*, *Motor Age*, *Nation*, *Argosy*, *Leslie's*, *New Republic*, *Farmers' Guide*, *Century*, *Editor*, *Life*, and the *Sunday School Times*, one.

VII. *What magazines do you look through with reasonable regularity?*

Three men said that they never looked at magazines. The favorite periodicals of the other men were the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Literary Digest*, and the *Cosmopolitan*. Forty-eight other papers and magazines were mentioned, from the *Nation* through to the *Police Gazette* and *Saucy Stories*.

HAROLD W. HAWK